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ABSTRACT

Learning difficult literary concepts (such as point of view, symbolism, or internal monologue) while reading difficult and often unfamiliar content prematurely places too many demands upon middle school and high school students. Young adult literature allows students to address the demands of a new concept while reading more familiar content. One specific technique found beneficial when teaching new concepts is the double entry journal. This technique requires students to write affective responses to readings and to compare such entries with classmates. After discussion with peers and critical analysis of the literature in class discussion, students write a second journal entry synthesizing insights gained from discussion, analysis, readings, and writings. Literary concepts can be introduced during the class discussion. Because adolescent literature works are relatively short, they can be used to introduce students to the experiences of various minorities, to life in historical periods, and to different genres of adult literature. (A list of questions to consider when evaluating adolescent literature titles for classroom instruction and a list of suggested titles organized by literary elements, themes, and approaches are included.) (HTH)

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Young Adult Literature: From Middle School to College

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Does adolescent literature have a place in the classroom? Should we spend valuable class time discussing this literature? As a colleague asks, "Isn't it our job to raise the standards of our students?" Once again, journal articles are addressing these questions. At all teaching levels, these questions lead to worthwhile, yet often heated, discussions of literature and also of teaching literature. If we examine our classroom goals, we need not be caught in a dichotomy. Instead, adolescent literature becomes a beneficial transition providing access to literary concepts as well as broadening experiences requisite to reading more mature adult literature. This paper offers a rationale for using young adult literature as a transition.

Young adult literature bridges the gap between children's literature and adult literature. No one expects the reader of Little House on the Prairie to plunge into Little Big Man. The secrets in The Secret Garden do not prepare the reader sufficiently for those in The Secret Sharer. As a bridge, adolescent literature keeps students from falling into a river of too difficult vocabulary, too complex syntax, and too demanding concepts. The bridge supplies experiences that increase confidence and develop abilities.

Teachers can utilize these reading experiences when they teach or review literary concepts. Learning difficult concepts (such as point of view, symbolism or internal monologue) while reading difficult and often unfamiliar content prematurely places too many demands upon the student. Instead,

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young adult literature allows the student to focus on the new concept, addressing that demand while reading about more familiar content. The point here is that a difficult concept plus difficult content often results in conceptual overload and frustration. On the other hand, a teaching approach that structures a difficult concept plus familiar content can lead students to earlier success with the concept.

One specific technique we have found beneficial when teaching new concepts is the double entry journal. We believe that to read without writing is an incomplete experience. It is within the experience of writing that we often discover what it is we could not previously articulate about our reading. The double-entry journal requires students to write affective response statements to readings, and to compare such entries with classmates. After discussion with peers and critical analysis of the literature, students write a second journal entry synthesizing insights gained from discussion, analysis, readings, and writings. This use of the journal leads students to discoveries throughout the process: while reading and while writing.

After each reading assignment, students make their first entry into the journal, an affective response to the reading. Because the first journal entry is affective, the writing leads students to discover the universal qualities of young adult literature. That is, readers find how their experiences are similar to those in the literature. Although several approaches to subjective criticism exist, we have found the work of David Bleich, Readings and Feelings (1975), to be most useful in the classroom. Bleich suggests a three-step response, starting with what he calls the percept. First, the students are asked to find what they consider to be the most important word, phrase, or sentence within the literature being studied. After making their selections, students support their response with explanations.

Following these explanations, readers respond affectively to this selection, the affect. They try to express how they feel about what they have perceived as most important within the literature. This section is not an evaluation of the literature, a frequent student assumption, but rather a response to the reader's own perceptions. The affect asks the reader to describe the raw emotions related to the perception. Usually these are familiar terms - anger, love, jealousy, indignation, contentment, resentment and so forth. Sometimes the stimulus touches a primordial feeling that the intellect can not readily describe. Attempting to express these feelings leads to further understanding.

The third step of the affective response, the association, requires writers/readers to consider times in their lives when they have had similar experiences and feelings. Although steps one and two usually prepare students for this part of the response, sometimes students are at a loss here. Two books which often leave students without a response are Sarah T and Go Ask Alice. Students can think of no way they are like these two females. Focusing on their initial responses will help them develop understanding and will lead to more associations. Once students stop focusing on alcohol or drugs, but rather on the feelings of insecurity or loneliness, they readily recall ways they are like Sarah and Alice.

The first journal entry, then, is this three-step response, the percept, the affect, and the association. Each section provides opportunities for discovery about the literature, and about self while writing. As a result of their first journal entry with its affective response, students come to class prepared to share their entries and to listen to those of others. In these small group discussions, each student begins to recognize various levels of response as well as any serious misreadings or oversimplifications of the

literature without teacher intervention. Sometimes there is excessive detachment from the text or over-eagerness to appropriate the poem to some larger preoccupation of the reader. Here is an opportunity for the instructor to intervene benefically. These problems can be addressed with such questions as, "Why do I think I saw the poem (or story) in just this way? Is there anything I know about myself that must explain this particular kind of perception?" Reader responses become the object of objectivity.

During small group discussion, members engage in synthesizing, looking for commonality in the group's perceptions, feelings, and associations. Initial responses are compared to the group's response with members noting what might be added to their own statements. Students jot down ways their responses differ from others, and make notes for future revisions. We consciously promote collaborative learning with the double-entry journal and related activites. The use of small groups becomes our main vehicle. Placing the small group work between the two journal entries provides a community in which readers and writers can test their ideas.

Concerns coming out of small group discussions often become the focus of class discussions. Literary concepts can be introduced at this point. Style, for example, is often taught to high school juniors, seniors, and again to college students. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye has long been successfully used as a teaching tool for this concept. I'd like to suggest two other specific titles: Barbara Wersba's Run Softly, Go Fast and Maia Wojciechowska's Don't Play Dead Before You Have To.

Other class discussions may focus on analyzing literature through various critical approaches. The sociological, archetypal, psychological, formalist, and affective approaches to literature can all be taught through young adult literature. For instance, the archetypal approach to literature can be

discussed and applied when reading Borland's When the Legends Die. The hero's quest, the circular pattern of the novel, and other archetypal characterizations can all be examined before utilizing this approach with more difficult literature. Consequently, adolescent literature becomes an effective teaching tool in college preparatory classes and at the college level. This literature written for young adults should not be restricted to general classes or the junior high school alone, but rather used throughout the curriculum when introducing new concepts.

Our own approaches differ during discussion as each of us focuses on a different school of criticism. But whichever criticism is preferred, it takes on new meaning when the reader examines how an author created the perceptions and the feelings previously identified by the reader. Imagery, symbolism, motifs, archetypes, all have new meaning as a result of the use of journals with young adult literature.

After writing the affective response, sharing this response in the small groups, and discussing the literature in class, the reader/writer returns to the journal. With new insights, with further understanding, and with heightened perceptions, the student writes the second entry. Here is the opportunity for each writer to discover and to articulate his or her own thoughts and feelings.

Some writers return to the affective response statement for clarification, for new information, for a new examination of the literature. These writers/readers note how their responses have changed and look for clues to such changes. The change in the student does not come from an authoritative figure full of critical canon, but rather from a highly activated sense of the worth of the one's own experience combined with reading the text, writing about prior experience and feelings, and discussing these with a community of peers.

The second journal entry provides students the opportunity to pursue questions raised in class discussions concerning the literature. For example, one student may explore Paterson's use of allusion in Jacob Have I Loved while another student may use sociological criticism in an attempt to further understand island life within the novel. Each writer brings small group concerns, class comments, and further examination of the literature to this second journal entry. Here is the time for synthesis, for reflection, and for integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The connections are many.

Because the time required to read adolescent literature is relatively short, we can use it as an introduction into various types of literature. Readers can quickly become involved in the experiences of various minorities. Laughing Boy by LaFarge provides awareness of Native American cultures, The Learning Tree by Parks gives insight into the Afro-American experience, and Jacob Have I Loved by Paterson promotes understanding of women in relationship to society.

For students who have little idea of what life in various historical periods was like, adolescent literature can act as an introduction. Pre-1776 America can be entered while reading Calico Captive or Witch of Blackbird Pond by Speare. Problems of the Civil War may be better understood by reading Hunt's Across Five Aprils. And students who wonder and worry about the possible reenstatement of the draft can see how it affected the '60's in Hentoff's I'm Really Dragged But Nothing Gets Me Down.

This broadening of experiences through adolescent literature can also be utilized when introducing students to various types of literature. Adult westerns, mysteries, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, all these and more have adolescent literature counterparts. Many students within my

adolescent literature classes at the college level moan and groan when I assign a fantasy. However, after meeting Gurgi in Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Series, their own "moanings and groanings" cease as they are caught up in his "gnashings and thrashings." These students want to continue the series after the one assigned book. This broadening of experiences through literature makes for a better prepared reader as well as providing insights into the human condition.

If we believe that a primary value of literature is the exploration of human experience, then adolescent literature provides us with many opportunities. Anyone who reads A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich by Childress appreciates the complexity of emotions within an individual as well as the pressures of society upon one. Crawford's Three Legged Race stresses the interdependence of people and the frailty of such relationships. In The Chosen, Potok helps us explore the relationships of fathers and sons. Such readings can lead our students to what one of my colleagues has as a primary objective in literature classes: To study and understand other people so that we can better understand ourselves.

Most importantly, adolescent literature provides readers with a pleasureable reading experience. I remember when I was teaching high school seniors a unit loosely designed around parent-child relationships. The students knew what books we would be covering during the unit. When I opened my book closet to get the copies of Run Softly, Go Fast, I panicked, finding only four paperbacks on the shelf. Twenty-four students ignored my predicament as they buried their faces in their copies. These students, having helped themselves to my supply, were already well into the book. This incident, one like many others that teachers of adolescent literature will recall, illustrates the fact that students want to read these novels. In their voracious appetite, students (and teachers) need some direction.

When teachers ask us which young adult books are worth teaching, we ask them to respond to consider a title in conjunction with these questions:

1. How might this literature provide a bridge between children's literature and more mature literature?
2. What literary concepts might be taught utilizing this literature?
3. How might this literature broaden the reader's experiences?
4. In what ways might this literature lead to an understanding of the universality of human experiences?
5. What adult literature deals with the same themes?
6. What might readers like to read after this work? Why?

Responses to these questions help us all remember that young adult literature is a transition to more mature reading and to a future where reading is important. The following bibliography provides titles for consideration for classroom use from middle school to college.

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Plot

Robert Lipsyte	One Fat Summer
Robert Cormier	After the First Death
John Neufeld	Edgar Allen
Robert Newton Peck	A Day No Pigs Would Die
Lois Duncan	Killing Mr. Griffin

Point of View

Paul Zindel	The Pigman
Barbara Wersba	Run Softly, Go Fast
Daniel Keyes	Flowers for Algernon
Maia Wojciechowska	Don't Play Dead Before You Have To
Robert Cormier	I Am the Cheese

Theme

M.E. Kerr	Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack
Glendon Swarthout	Bless the Beasts and Children
Maia Wojceichowska	Don't Play Dead Before You Have To
S.E. Hinton	The Outsiders
Judy Blume	It's Not the End of the World

Setting

Phyllis McKillip	The Night Gift
Robert O'Brien	Z for Zachariah
Mildred Taylor	Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Anne McCaffrey	Dragonsong

Character Development

S.E. Hinton	Tex
Isabelle Holland	The Man Without a Face
Paula Danziger	Pistachio Prescription
Richard Bradford	Red Sky at Morning

Literary Techniques

Katherine Paterson	Jacob Have I Loved (Allusions)
Glendon Swarthout	Bless the Beasts and Children (Flashback)
Lloyd Alexander	The Prydain Series(Figurative Language)
Elizabeth Speare	The Witch of Blackbird Pond
Paul Zindel	The Pigman (Symbolism)
Susan Cooper	The Dark Is Rising Series

Literary Style

S.E. Hinton	The Outsiders
Barbara Wersba	Run Softly, Go Fast
	Tunes for a Small Harmonica
Maia Wojciechowska	Don't Play Dead Before You Have To
Padgett Powell	Edisto

TYPES OF LITERATURE

The Problem Novel

Judy Blume	It's Not the End of the World
Robin Brancato	Winning
Lois Lowry	A Summer to Die
Jean Renvoize	A Wild Thing
Marilyn Harris	Hatter Fox
Chaim Potok	The Chosen

Adventure Romance

Margaret Craven	I Heard the Owl Call My Name
Robert Lipsyte	The Contender
Scott O'Dell	The Island of the Blue Dolphins
Lloyd Alexander	The Kestrel

Love Romance

M.E. Kerr	If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?
Herman Raucher	Summer of '42
Erich Segal	Love Story
Mildred Lee	The People Therein

Adventure

Peter Benchley	Jaws
Sheila Burnford	The Incredible Journey
Harry Mazer	Snowbound
D.R. Sherman	The Lion's Paw

Westerns

Jack Schaefer	Shane
Oliver LaFarge	Laughing Boy
Larry McMurty	The Last Picture Show
Richard Bradford	Red Sky at Morning

Mysteries

Lois Duncan	Killing Mr. Griffin
Ellen Raskin	The Westing Game
John Rowe Townsend	The Intruder
Jay Bennett	The Killing Tree

Science Fiction

John Christopher	The White Mountains
Robert O'Brien	Z for Zachariah

Fantasy

Lloyd Alexander	The Prydain Series
Susan Cooper	The Dark Is Rising Series
Anne McCaffrey	Dragonsong Series
Phyllis McKillip	The Riddle-Master Series

Autobiographical Writing

Anne Frank	The Diary of a Young Girl
Bette Greene	The Summer of My German Soldier
Gale Sayers	I Am Third
Ron Luciano	The Umpire Strikes Back

Minority Literature

Cam Hubert	Dreamspeaker
Hal Borland	When the Legends Die
William Armstrong	Sounder
Gordon Parks	The Learning Tree
Mildred Taylor	Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Sharon Bell Mathis	Listen for the Fig Tree

Women's Literature

Barbara Wersba	Tunes for a Small Harmonica
Isabelle Holland	Of Love and Death and Other Journeys
Katherine Paterson	Jacob Have I Loved

APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

Sociological Approach

William Armstrong	Sounder
John Knowles	A Separate Peace
Elizabeth Speare	Witch of Blackbird Pond
Maureen Daly	Seventeenth Summer
Padgett Powell	Edisto

Archetypal Approach

Robert Lipsyte	One Fat Summer
Phyllis McKillip	The Forgotten Beasts of Eld
Hal Borland	When the Legends Die

Psychological Approach

Barbara Wersba	Run Softly, Go Fast
M.E. Kerr	Gentlehands
Isabelle Holland	The Man Without a Face

Formalist Approach

Robert Lipsyte	The Contender
Robert Cormier	The Chocolate War
Richard Bradford	Red Sky at Morning

Affective Approach

Scott O'Dell	Island of the Blue Dolphins
Norma Klein	Mom, the Wolfman, and Me
John Neufeld	Edgar Allen
Virginia Hamilton	Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush

INTRODUCTIONS TO HISTORICAL PERIODS

Elizabeth Speare	Witch of Blackbird Pond
	Calico Captive
Edna Forbes	Johnny Tremain
Irene Hunt	Across Five Aprils
William Armstrong	Sounder
Mildred Taylor	Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Robert Newton Peck	A Day No Pigs Would Die
Katherine Paterson	Jacob Have I Loved
John Knowles	A Separate Peace
Richard Bradford	Red Sky at Morning
Maureen Daly	Seventeenth Summer
Nat Hentoff	I'm Really Dragged But Nothing Gets Me Down
Barbara Wersba	Run Softly, Go Fast

TO EXPLORE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Alice Childress	A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich
Charles Crawford	Three-Legged Race
Vera and Bill Cleaver	Where the Lilies Bloom
Chaim Potok	The Chosen
Gertrude Samuels	Run, Shelley, Run!
M.E. Kerr	I'll Love You When You're More Like Me
	Gentlehands
Wilson Rawls	Where the Red Fern Grows
Marily Harris	Hatter Fox
Alan Sillitoe	The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner
Mildred Taylor	Let the Circle Be Unbroken
Sue Ellen Bridgers	Notes for Another Life